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28/1

(Amended) An absorbent composite comprising a first stratum, a second stratum, and a transition zone [therebetween and integrally connecting] intermediate and coextensive with the first and second strata;

the first stratum comprising polyethylene terephthalate fibers and bicomponent binding fibers;

the second stratum comprising crosslinked fibers and bicomponent binding fibers; and

the transition zone comprising fibers [from one stratum extending into the other stratum] from the first and second strata commingled substantially uniformly across the composite's width and along the composite's length.

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28/2

(Amended) An absorbent composite comprising a first stratum, a second stratum, and a transition zone [therebetween and integrally connecting] intermediate and coextensive with the first and second strata;

the first stratum comprising polyethylene terephthalate fibers and bicomponent binding fibers;

the second stratum comprising crosslinked fibers and a wet strength agent; and

the transition zone comprising fibers [from one stratum extending into the other stratum] from the first and second strata commingled substantially uniformly across the composite's width and along the composite's length.

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28/3

(Amended) [An] A foam-formed absorbent composite comprising a first [foam-formed] stratum, a second [foam-formed] stratum; and a transition zone [therebetween and integrally connecting] intermediate and coextensive with the first and second strata;

the first stratum comprising hydrophobic fibers and a binder;

the second stratum comprising a binder and fibers selected from the group consisting of hydrophilic fibers, hydrophobic fibers, and mixtures thereof; and

the transition zone comprising fibers [from one stratum extending into the other stratum] from the first and second strata commingled substantially uniformly across the composite's width and along the composite's length.

Please add Claims 62-77.

26 ~~20-67~~. An absorbent composite comprising a first stratum, a second stratum, and a transition zone intermediate and coextensive with the first and second strata;

the first stratum comprising first fibers and a binder;

the second stratum comprising second fibers and a binder; and

the transition zone comprising fibers from the first and second strata commingled substantially uniformly across the composite's width and along the composite's length.

27 ~~31 63~~. The composite of Claim ~~62~~ ^{26 30} wherein the first fibers comprise synthetic fibers.

28 ~~31 64~~. The composite of Claim ~~62~~ ^{26 30} wherein the first fibers comprise polyethylene terephthalate fibers.

29 ~~31 65~~. The composite of Claim ~~62~~ ^{26 30} wherein the second fibers comprise crosslinked cellulosic fibers.

30 ~~31 66~~. The composite of Claim ~~62~~ ^{26 30} wherein the binder is selected from at least one of bicomponent binder fibers and a wet strength agent.

31 ~~31 67~~. An absorbent composite comprising a first stratum, a second stratum, and a transition zone intermediate and coextensive with the first and second strata;

the first stratum comprising synthetic fibers and a binder;

the second stratum comprising crosslinked cellulosic fibers and a binder; and

the transition zone comprising fibers from the first and second strata commingled substantially uniformly across the composite's width and along the composite's length.

32 ~~31 68~~. The composite of Claim ~~67~~ ^{31 35} wherein the synthetic fibers comprise polyethylene terephthalate fibers.

33 ~~31 69~~. The composite of Claim ~~67~~ ^{31 35} wherein the binder is at least one of bicomponent binder fibers and a wet strength agent.

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33 70. A foam-formed absorbent composite comprising a first stratum, a second stratum, and a transition zone intermediate and coextensive with the first and second strata;
the first stratum comprising first fibers and a binder;
the second stratum comprising second fibers and a binder; and
the transition zone comprising fibers from the first and second strata commingled substantially uniformly across the composite's width and along the composite's length.

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39 71. The composite of Claim 34 wherein the first fibers comprise synthetic fibers.

36 40 72. The composite of Claim 34 wherein the first fibers comprise polyethylene terephthalate fibers.

37 41 73. The composite of Claim 34 wherein the second fibers comprise crosslinked cellulosic fibers.

38 42 74. The composite of Claim 34 wherein the binder is selected from at least one of bicomponent binder fibers and a wet strength agent.

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39 43 75. A foam-formed absorbent composite comprising a first stratum, a second stratum, and a transition zone intermediate and coextensive with the first and second strata;
the first stratum comprising synthetic fibers and a binder;
the second stratum comprising crosslinked cellulosic fibers and a binder; and
the transition zone comprising fibers from the first and second strata commingled substantially uniformly across the composite's width and along the composite's length.

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44 76. The composite of Claim 39 wherein the synthetic fibers comprise polyethylene terephthalate fibers.

41 45 77. The composite of Claim 39 wherein the binder is at least one of bicomponent binder fibers and a wet strength agent.--

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